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**MAYOR EMANUEL INTRODUCES ORDINANCE TO SAFEGUARD RESIDENTS, WORKERS
FROM RADIATION IN STREETERVILLE & BRONZEVILLE**

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Aldermen Brendan Reilly and Alderman Sophia King introduced an ordinance to City Council today to protect residents, visitors and workers from potentially harmful radiation. The ordinance requires that contractors use proper safeguards when digging is performed in Streeterville or at the former Michael Reese Hospital site in Bronzeville, where radioactive elements have been found under the surface. Although there have been no reports of illness resulting from these hazards in recent years, the city is committed to being proactive to ensure safety.

“As our downtown continues to thrive and we expand that economic opportunity to a historically vacant part the south side at the Michael Reese site, we must do it in a way that ensures the safety and health of residents in every part of this city,” said Mayor Emanuel. “With this proactive step, we are taking care to ensure that any radiation that may be there won’t impact residents or the economic development that will ensue for years to come.”

Today, contractors are required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to have a radiation specialist on hand to monitor the work and ensure worker and resident safety. This ordinance will institute clear city protocols for what contractors should do if radioactive elements are found and outlines significant fines for when those rules are not followed. The proposed ordinance would set explicit requirements for contractors before, during, and after the work projects and establish fines of \$5,000 to \$10,000 for each day that the requirements aren’t met.

The contamination occurred in the early 1900’s due to factories located in these areas—including a gas lantern manufacturer that left thorium in Streeterville, and a refinery that left thorium and radium in a small section of the Bronzeville neighborhood under the Michael Reese Hospital site. People are safe from contamination as long as the radioactive elements remain below layers of clean soil, asphalt or concrete. Roadwork and construction projects have the potential to unearth contaminated soil and release radiation.

“Exposure to radioactive materials like thorium and radium poses serious health risks, including cancer,” said Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) Commissioner Julie Morita, M.D. “We protect our residents and workers from exposure to carcinogenic materials.”

This measure is the latest step in a series of environmental protections. Recently, Mayor Emanuel imposed tough regulations to protect Southeast Side residents from air pollution from industrial facilities and cracked down on illegal dumping and storage of waste.

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